

AGENDA ITEM III A
PROPOSED ACADEMIC PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS
BACHELOR OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During 1982-83, the Board of Regents conducted a statewide review of all undergraduate programs in General Studies. The primary reason for this review was the lack of uniformity and coherence among the many such programs offered at state colleges and universities. As a result of this process, a set of Statewide Requirements for Undergraduate Programs in General Studies was adopted (see Appendix). These requirements have served as the basis for the design and structure of all such program since.

Last Fall, UNO began discussion with staff regarding the possibility of offering a Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies (BIS) program. The University's initial idea was to rename and alter its existing Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) program. After careful consideration, the staff advised UNO that this was not a feasible method to accomplish their desired goal as the two programs in question have clearly different design elements and serve different purposes. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics differentiate these two program by CIP Codes and program descriptions. Briefly, these distinctions can be summarized as follows::

1. Bachelor of General Studies - Programs of this type provide the student with a broad-based, multidisciplinary education. Besides required general education, this program focuses on content exposure through the completion of defined, multiple Enrichment Blocks (Arts, Humanities, Science, etc.). The curriculum is further complimented by an area of concentration that can be disciplinary or interdisciplinary. The primary focus of this program is service to students with broad-ranging interests that may not be best served by choosing a specific major or theme. The primary emphasis is upon a breadth of knowledge across general discipline areas.
2. Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies - Programs of this type are is intended to provide the student with a more versatile and individualized educational experience than the BGS. Besides required general education, this curriculum allows student in consultation with faculty to design and complete a thematically-oriented individualized learning plan. These programs are usually employed in one of two ways: (a) to address the needs of advanced undergraduates with complex learning goals; or (b) to educate primarily adult learners and/or part-time students who need the flexibility of a curriculum designed to balance work and

life responsibilities with educational opportunities. It is this later objective which UNO is pursuing. In which case, the term “integrated studies’ is often utilized. The primary emphasis is less on breadth of knowledge, but rather depth across a broad thematic area not found in a specific major.

The staff notes that both the BGS and BIS are commonly accepted as viable curricula across the academy, and there is no perceived preference for one over another. Indeed, given their multiple and differing purposes, many universities offer both types of programs, as is the case for UNO.

As there appeared to be no controversial planning matters associated with this endeavor, the staff agreed to waive the Letter of Intent stage.

STAFF ANALYSIS

1. Program Description/Objectives

Quoting from the University proposal:

For almost every college student "general studies" are part of going to college. Most students also specialize in a single subject. However, as an alternate path, a student may decide not to concentrate in one subject, but rather to diversify. At many universities, degree programs in general studies or interdisciplinary studies have been created to serve students who want something other than a traditional major.

The Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies (BIS) is a multidisciplinary degree intended to provide versatility for students seeking an individualized learning experience. The program's primary focus is adult learners and part-time students who need the flexibility of a curriculum designed to balance work and life responsibilities with educational opportunities. The BIS is a unique degree program that offers students the opportunity to design their own programs of study in order to meet personal or career goals that may not be better served by traditional majors.

A recent study of current general studies' students indicated various reasons for pursuit of a non-traditional degree. Many have coursework from previous enrollments at UNO or other colleges, and seek a flexible degree completion opportunity. Some students pursue the degree to increase their chances for advancement in their jobs. Nearly 90 percent of current general studies' students are employed, and over 50 percent plan to stay with their current employer after graduation. Others want to develop a program which will help them change careers. Over 60 percent of respondents indicated plans to continue in post-baccalaureate certification or graduate studies. Others want a degree to experience the satisfaction of completing their personal and educational goals. Regardless of motivation, these students are not looking for an “easy way out.” They are prepared and motivated to turn a career or personal goal into a degree.

2. Need

Regarding program need, the proposal notes:

This degree has not been offered previously at the University of New Orleans. There are no public 4-year universities in the state offering the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies degree. Programs in general studies do exist in the more traditional format where students select from pre-determined minors, blocks, or subject groupings.

The Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies will provide even greater opportunities for students to combine disciplines in unique ways. Students can appreciate the opportunity to develop connections across disciplines and seek a pathway that takes them outside traditional program boundaries. The current BGS program identity is tied to the general studies name. The campus community, as well as broader community, often lacks understanding regarding the nature of the current program. The vagueness of the general studies degree name is an often expressed concern of students. Giving students the option of pursuing a Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies will allow for a more focused approach to student recruitment and regional marketing of the program.

Upon approval of the BIS Program, currently enrolled BGS students will be given the opportunity to elect to continue to pursue the BGS degree in its current format. At the end of the second full year of the BIS program, the distribution of students in the two programs, the BIS and BGS will be reviewed. If there is continuing interest and value to the students in maintaining both programs, they will be maintained. If, there is more interest in the BIS and less in the BGS, a request will be made to drop the BGS program providing students enrolled at that time ample opportunity to complete the existing BGS format.

3. Curriculum

The proposal states:

All students seeking a Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies degree must participate in the course and academic experiences indicated below. The degree requirements include the Introductory Seminar – Understanding Interdisciplinary Studies designed to provide prospective students an overview of the broad range of opportunities available to them in the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies program. BIS Process Writings requires BIS students to reflect regularly on how they are integrating their courses of study into a coherent whole. Finally, the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies Capstone Project requires students to reflect on the totality of their BIS academic experience.

Programs of study leading to the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies degree include 56 semester hours of course work designed to satisfy general degree requirements in English composition, literature, mathematics, arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, computer literacy and oral competency.

Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies students develop a 36-credit hour individualized learning plan (ILP) through completion of the required Introductory Seminar with guidance and assistance of professional staff and faculty. The ILP incorporates a minimum of three subject areas (plus the one credit hour Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies Capstone Project) that clearly represent a well-designed, comprehensive program of study structured to meet the student's unique goals, and should not be readily available under any other established BA or BS degree programs at the university.

Students complete 27 hours of elective course work which support ILP development, satisfy other interests, or may be needed as requisites for upper-division course selections.

The BIS degree requires 45 semester credit hours of upper division course work. Much of this course work will be included in the ILP, but it may be applied in other areas of the program. Upper division course work is defined as any course numbered between 3000-4999 in the UNO Catalog, or transfer work completed at a 4-year university at the junior/senior level.

All students must also complete a one credit hour Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies Capstone Project course in which they will summarize their academic, personal, and career expectations upon completing the BIS program. Completion of this course will partial fulfill BIS degree checkout and exit requirements.

The proposed program would adopt the following curricular schematic:

Overview

120 total creditable hours

- 1. 56 Credit Hours of General Education Requirements*
- 2. 36 Credit Hours in Interdisciplinary Individualized Learning Plan (ILP)*
- 3. 28 Credit Hours in Supporting Prerequisite or Elective Course Work*

General Education Requirements

Credit Hours

- | | |
|---|----------|
| <i>1. English - ENGL 1156/1157 and ENGL 1158 or ENGL 1159 with a C or better. A passing grade on the English 1158 Proficiency Exam is required for all degrees.</i> | <i>6</i> |
| <i>2. Literature - Two courses in the study of literature.</i> | <i>6</i> |
| <i>3. Mathematics - Two courses at or above the 1000 level.</i> | <i>6</i> |

4. *Natural Sciences - 11 hours including eight hours of one science (with two laboratory credits) and three hours of another. One of the sciences must be Biology and the other must be Chemistry, Earth & Environmental Sciences, or Physics* 11
5. *Computer Literacy - Each student should develop a reasonable competence in those computing techniques most relevant to their program. This requirement may be fulfilled by one of the following: successful completion of CSCI 1000 or other computer science course of 3 credits or more; successful completion of BA 2780; advanced standing credit for CSCI 1000, earned by successful completion of an examination Administered by the Computer Science Department; or successful completion of a course or series of courses which have been approved by the University Courses and Curricula Committee as fulfilling the computer literacy requirement.* 3
6. *Humanities and Arts - 12 hours to include a minimum of 6 hours at the sophomore level (2000) or above. One of the courses to satisfy the arts requirement (fine arts, music or theater). Humanities include Film, Theater and Communication Arts, English, Fine Arts, Foreign Language (above the level of 1001 or 1011), Journalism, Music, and Philosophy.* 12
7. *Social Sciences - 12 hours to include a minimum of 6 hours at the sophomore level (2000) or above. Social Sciences include Anthropology, Economics, Geography, History, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, Women's Studies and Urban Studies.* 12

Individualized Learning Plan (ILP)

1. *Introductory Seminar—Understanding Interdisciplinary Studies* 0
Open to pre-BIS students and required for BIS majors (seminar with no academic credit). The Introductory Seminar provides students an opportunity to explore literature relevant to interdisciplinary studies and to research how to design their own Interdisciplinary Learning Plan (ILP). Over the course of the semester, students will develop their analytical skills as they plan their ILP proposal, and as they also learn about BIS program expectations. This course will also lay the foundation for required process writings and the capstone BIS project.
2. *Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) -Interdisciplinary program* 36
containing a minimum of three subject areas clearly representing a central focus for the student's studies. A maximum of five

courses (15 credit hours) is permitted from any single subject. Course work from the Colleges of Business, Education and Human Development, and Engineering, regardless of department, are considered as single subjects.

3. *Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Process Writings - Ongoing BIS* 0
process writing is required as students complete 30, 60, and 90 semester hours of college credit. Process writings will be reviewed by the BIS staff and will then be placed in the student's academic file to be used as the foundation for preparing the student's required capstone project. Forms and guidelines for the process writings will be provided within the required BIS Introductory Seminar. The Process Writings will include a list of course work completed and a short narrative on how the course work relates to each student's Individualized Learning Plan. This is a non-graded required activity completed.

4. *Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies Capstone Project -* 1
Prerequisite: Completion of at least 90 hours and enrolled in the BIS program. This course is required for all BIS majors and must be completed within the semester prior to the students' final semester in degree residence. Each student will prepare a 5 – 10 page reflection paper based on the ongoing process papers, the overall educational and co-curricular experience, and analytical skills attained through academic course work. The paper will be reviewed by a faculty committee of BIS faculty will summarize the student's career, academic and personal expectations upon completing the BIS program. Completion of this course will partially fulfill BIS degree checkout and exit requirements.

4. Students

The proposal provides the following student projections:

Projected enrollments

	<i>Freshmen</i>	<i>Sophomore</i>	<i>Juniors</i>	<i>Seniors</i>	<i>Post-Bac.</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Year 1</i>	158	105	138	196	10	607
<i>Year 2</i>	164	110	144	217	11	646
<i>Year 3</i>	174	120	165	245	12	716
<i>Year 4</i>	185	132	176	271	13	777
<i>Year 5</i>	203	142	194	300	14	853

Initially, students will come from the already enrolled students in the general studies program in Metropolitan College. Current (FA 2007) enrollment in the general studies program totals 668 with 258 male and 410 female students. Additionally, it is expected that students will be drawn to the university when this degree program becomes available and is marketed locally with the name change. The potential market includes working adult and part-time students with prior college credit who are seeking a flexible and unique way to complete degrees. Specific emphasis will be placed on allied health workers with 2-yr degrees, military personnel, and criminal justice employees.

The staff believes these enrollment projections may be overly generous. While staff does not dispute the attractiveness of the proposed curriculum, it is expected that current BGS students at the junior-level and above will be more likely to complete the BGS program of studies, rather than transfer to the BIS program solely because of ease of applicability of credits already earned.

The proposal did not provide any graduate projections.

5. Faculty

The proposal notes the following regarding faculty resources:

As an interdisciplinary degree program course work and faculty will be drawn from colleges and departments across most disciplines. Since this proposed program is interdisciplinary the students will take all of their coursework in existing courses in the various departments. Therefore, no new faculty will be needed.

6. Library and Other Informational Resources

The proposal states the following regarding library/informational resources:

The existing library holdings at UNO are adequate to support the proposed program. The library's collection consists of approximately 800,000 volumes with 16,000 volumes added yearly. The library maintains over 3,000 current periodicals subscriptions including many electronic journals. The library also subscribes to a wide selection of electronic resources which contain both bibliographic citations and full-text items. Many of these are available both on and off campus. Library holdings will not need to be expanded.

7. Facilities and Equipment

The proposal assesses available facility and equipment as follows:

Facilities are minimally adequate for year 1. Additional office and storage space will be needed as addition of an Academic Director, additional professional staff, graduate assistants, and clerical staff will be required. Additional equipment will be required to support new staff and the anticipated growth in student population

8. Administration

The proposal provides the following administrative plan:

The Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies will be administered by Metropolitan College, under the supervision of the Academic Director of BIS. Oversight of the BIS program is the responsibility of the Interdisciplinary Studies Committee composed of faculty from the Colleges of Business Administration, Education and Human Development, Engineering, Liberal Arts, Sciences, and the Library. The Interdisciplinary Studies Committee is convened and supported by the Office of the Provost. The Academic Director for the program is appointed by the Provost upon the recommendation of the Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and Dean of Metropolitan College.

In order to maintain and enhance the number of faculty involved with the BIS program, another function of the BIS Committee will be to nominate two faculty members from their respective colleges to serve as BIS Faculty Associates. These Associates will serve as college and departmental resources for BIS students. Selected members of the BIS Committee and Faculty Associates will serve as members of a panel to review BIS Capstone projects.

9. Accreditation

No specialized accreditation is available for the proposed program.

10. Costs

The proposal makes the following statement regarding costs projections:

No additional funding is anticipated since the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies program as the current budget staffing for the Bachelor of General Studies program will be sufficient to support both programs.

STAFF SUMMARY

The proposed new Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies program at the University of New Orleans should be an exciting and challenging endeavor for both University students and faculty. This type of program is particularly relevant to a campus like UNO which serves many adult learners looking for relevant and applicable curricula designed to meet their varying need. UNO's depth and breadth of course and curricular offering should provide many possible venues for educational fulfillment for these students.

The primary key to success in such programs are structures which guarantee educational coherency. The appointment of an Academic Director, the oversight by the BIS Committee, and assignment of Faculty Associates as student advisors should be sufficient to ensure content

relevance. It is particularly critical that student advisement be provided on almost continual basis so that students remain firmly focused on their program goals.

Student number, the staff believes, are somewhat overgenerous. The University may have underestimate the continued attractiveness and utility of the BGS, in which case initial enrollment is more likely from new students. Graduate projections were not provided and need to be addressed still.

While the staff agrees that new costs are likely to be small, still there are some items which will require new and/or additional funding: salary for the Academic Director; staff support, operational costs for the BIS Committee; office and other administrative space and equipment, etc. These costs issues should be addressed soon.

Overall, the staff is enthusiastic about this proposal, and with just a few stipulations for program monitoring, recommends approval.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee grant conditional approval for the proposed Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Science (CIP Code 30.9999) program at the University of New Orleans. By August 1, 2008, the University shall submit to the Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs a revised 5-year, budget plan which addresses continuing program needs as indicated in the Staff Summary. Upon acceptance of this report, the Associate Commissioner shall authorize program implementation, anticipated for Fall, 2008. Beginning June 1, 2009, and on that date thereafter until otherwise directed, the University shall submit a report to the Associate Commissioner addressing the following:

- 1. Number of BIS enrollees (by class level and FT/PT);***
- 2. Number of BGS enrollees (by class level and FT/PT);***
- 3. Number of BIS graduates;***
- 4. Number of BGS graduates; and***
- 5. Placement of BIS Graduates.***